1: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1954 RR1 Siberia RR1

316 (previously N.K.V.D.). Under the general direction of the latter a
655 powerful state enterprise called 'Dalstroy' has come into being in the Soviet Far East. It has taken over many functions that are usually carried out by local government organs. Dalstroy is primarily a mining trust for the development of gold mining on the upper reaches of the Kolyma River. Similar to some mining companies in the colonies of other powers, such as the Société Minière du Haut Katanga in the Belgian Congo, the Dalstroy rules almost as sovereign master over the territory where it exploits the underground riches. Although administrative authorities do exist in the land of the Dalstroy they are completely dependent on the directorate of this enterprise.

635 The activities of the Dalstroy are many-sided. The 'Mining Adminis-
625 tration' ('Gornoe Upravlenie') is only one of several big departments over which the Dalstroy director and his two deputy directors rule. In addition to the 'Political Administration', there is an 'Administration for Agriculture' supervising the work of the local collective farms and state farms, and an 'Administration for Road Building'. There are also a fair number of subsidiary trusts and enterprises which take their orders from the Dalstroy director. There are, for instance, the supply organizations 'Dalstroysnab' and 'Kolymsnab', the coal-mining trust 'Dalugol', a building trust, the state trading firm 'Magadantorg' and a special fleet which connects the Dalstroy with Vladivostok. This entire huge organization is kept together by a small army of M.V.D. men and by a whole network of 'political departments', the activity of which extends to the most distant parts of the Kolyma mining district. The bulk of the workers, technicians and officials of the Dalstroy consists of actual convicts, or of ex-convicts who have been set free because of
[461] 'good behaviour'. A list of over 400 Dalstroy officials and workers who were awarded orders and medals at the beginning of 1941 shows that the Dalstroy is a microcosm of the Soviet Union. Indeed, a list of people decorated with the medal 'For Excellency of Labour' starts rather significantly with the following three names:

1. Abdulgasimov, Nazhim, miner;
2. Akopyan, Amayak Avanesovich, newspaper editor;
3. Aksenov, Vladimir Mikhailovich, driver. . . .[15]

Of these three the first is a Moslem, the second an Armenian and the third a Russian. The order is perhaps not very characteristic since the Russian element predominates by far among the more prominent Dalstroy people, but there are also Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Jews and Moslems among them.

167 The colonization activities of Dalstroy have changed the character
361 of the hinterland of the Okhotsk Sea, which, until 1931, was still virtually uninhabited. The most palpable achievement has been the foundation of the town of Magadan, the post-war population of which has been

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this early period of construction Komsomolsk had a street with the characteristic nickname of 'Street of Accidents', and a whole quarter was known as the 'Fire Settlement' ('Pozharny Posyolok').

Things in Komsomolsk went wrong for several years, and in 1937, when the city celebrated its fifth anniversary, the party authorities thought that the time had come to carry out a large-scale purge among the builders of the 'City of Youth'. One of the most distinguished citizens of the new town, the director of its metallurgical plant, then declared bluntly, 'We are mercilessly rooting out this scum of wreckers'.[19] 'This scum of wreckers' were people whom official Soviet propaganda had previously included among the selfless enthusiastic patriots engaged in self-sacrificing, heroic construction work. To justify the purge the party leadership alleged that 'agents of foreign intelligence services, bandits and diversionists' had penetrated into the ranks of workers and technicians of Komsomolsk, thanks to the complacency of certain leading personalities. According to the official version the 'enemies of the people' at work in Komsomolsk were very active and ingenious. They mixed concrete with sugar so that the degree of its cohesion was lowered, they put glass into ball-bearings to provoke accidents and destroyed vital blue-prints to delay the growth of local industry.

The real reason for the chaos in Komsomolsk was not the criminal activity of wreckers, but the lack of co-ordination between the various state trusts which owned the industrial enterprises in the town-to-be. Each of these trusts constructed a workers' settlement around its plant, and until 1940 there was no over-all building plan for the much advertised town of the Communist Youth League. This explains why sanitary conditions and municipal services were still practically non-existent, even by the outbreak of the Second World War.

The over-all building plan of Komsomolsk which came into being in 1940 provided for a population of 500,000.[20] Although the fulfilment of this aim is still far off, Komsomolsk has become an economic and cultural factor in the Far East. In 1947 the town had 100,000 inhabitants and was the proud owner of two undertakings of all-Union importance, the Iron and Steel Works, 'Amurstal', and a shipyard.[21] Cultural life, too, had developed greatly. The number of schools reached thirty-four in 1947 and forty-five in 1952. In addition, Komsomolsk has a Palace of Culture, a theatre, thirty libraries, a training college for teachers of secondary schools, a music school and four 'parks of culture and rest'.[22] It has tried to keep up its reputation as a 'City of Youth' and is still recruiting young workers from European Russia, particularly from among war orphans.

The second big Komsomol initiative for the settlement of the Far East, the Khetagurova movement, has its roots in the lack of women in the Far East and the necessity to remedy the situation. The well-

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indeed, 'The further away we send a man, the more we must be able to trust him'.[4] It can be taken for granted that a man whom the Communist Party considers particularly trustworthy will be a hard-working official, and that he will not commit any crimes such as those of which Semenchuk and Startsev had been convicted. But a trustworthy communist is not necessarily a man who understands the mentality of the Far Eastern aborigines, and who deals with their problems in the best way.

NATIVES, STATE TRUSTS AND FORCED LABOUR

In addition to the Party and the territorial administration, there is a third influential factor in the Far East which has a great impact on the 'natives', namely the big State capitalist organizations of Kamchatka, Chukotka and the territories around the Okhotsk Sea. Instead of assisting and strengthening native economy the Soviet régime encouraged the growth of State companies such as the 'Kamchatka Limited Company' (later known as 'Glavkamchatrybprom' – Kamchatka Chief Administration for the Fishing Industry), the 'State Reindeer Trust', the 'Dalrybtrest' (Far Eastern Fishing Trust) and 'Soyuzpushnina', the State organization for fur trading. Soviet experts on the Far East themselves have admitted that these enterprises employed people who were guided by a 'narrow-minded business attitude' and who discharged their duties in a 'crudely materialistic way'. All they wanted was to fulfil the target figures of the state plan. They were not interested in assisting the natives either by supplying the most essential food commodities or by encouraging cultural work. The enterprises concerned, in particular the Kamchatka Company and the Reindeer Trust, seized land, and hunting and fishing grounds traditionally belonging to the natives. Even land owned by newly established collective farms of reindeer-breeders was arbitrarily confiscated by State trusts.[5]

Another State enterprise, the previously mentioned 'Dalstroy', which operates around the Okhotsk Sea, has also greatly affected the life of the 'natives' who live in its territory. The first director of Dalstroy, E. Berzin, pointed out in 1936 that the trust had opened schools and hospitals in all centres of the native population. The budget of the native communities ('National Districts') had increased almost ten times during five years.[6] What Berzin did not say was that the native schools and hospitals had been built with the profits which Dalstroy had made by exploiting forced labour. As a matter of fact, some of the schools of which Berzin boasted are 'mixed schools', which are attended both by natives and by children of convicts who were born in captivity and taken away from their mothers.[7] In the area controlled by the Dalstroy we thus meet the most sinister aspect of the 'Soviet nationalities policy', namely, its

connection with the forced labour system. A sparsely populated territory on the Kolyma River and around the Okhotsk Sea, which, not so long before, had been the home only of Eveni, Yakuts and other natives, had suddenly become an object of mass colonization by convicts, probably by as many as 400,000. The sudden emergence of huge forced labour camps in tribal territories was bound to have a considerable effect both on the way of life and on the moral outlook of the natives. It is only logical that the N.K.V.D.-M.V.D. should have tried to enlist the support of the natives against camp inmates trying to escape. Former political prisoners have even asserted that the N.K.V.D. pays the natives, either in cash or in the form of vodka, for every escaped person whom they capture.[8] This makes it understandable that the prisoners extend their contempt of the N.K.V.D. to the natives. They charge the authorities with 'coddling and pampering' them in the very areas in which many members of Russia's intelligentsia are gradually being exterminated.[9] It must be said in fairness that the N.K.V.D. is not the first Russian authority to discover that use can be made of Far Eastern natives against convicts from European Russia. The priority for this idea goes to the Czarist governor of Sakhalin Island, General Konotovich. Chekhov, mentioned in his book on Sakhalin that the General had ordered Gilyaks (Nivkhi) to be employed as guards for Russian criminals.

THE REINDEER PROBLEM

Lack of understanding of the 'natives' is manifested not only by the activities of the big State trusts, but also in the day-to-day work of Soviet officials in charge of 'native affairs'. Communist Party officials think in terms of ready-made patterns, and cut-and-dried formulae. They are usually convinced that what is good for Moscow and Vladivostok must be equally good for the most remote parts of the Union. This frame of mind makes it difficult for them to find the right approach to the special conditions of the Far North. Much could be said, for instance, about the peculiar way in which Soviet authorities have handled the basis of Far Northern economy, reindeer-breeding. As late as 1950, the Communist Party of a Siberian province sent large piles of pamphlets on sheep-farming and bee-keeping to the nomads living near the Arctic coast, where there are neither sheep nor bees – only reindeer.[10] This actually happened in North-western Siberia, but it could easily have happened in the Far East. The *Pravda* correspondent in Khabarovsk stated in 1947 that there was not a single specialist in problems of reindeer-breeding in the State and Party offices of that city, although the Khabarovsk Territory includes the largest reindeer population of any administrative unit in the Soviet Union.[11]

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466 According to other sources the number of ships in Dalstroy service is higher than the four ships cited above; it has been positively stated that in 1940-1941 five more steamers (Minsk, Kiev, Igarka, Komsomol, and Uritsky) and the icebreaker, "Sakhalin," were in operation with a total shipping capacity of 35,000 passengers. (Note: Local Soviet Far Eastern radio stations which service areas with shipping administrations have been noted to make reference to the Uritsky, and in the course of the past six months a vessel named "Komsomolsk" may be the ship "Komsomol," as included in the ships carrying slave labor. This possible identification is noted because monitoring of local Soviet Far Eastern radio stations has always been plagued with the difficulty of "making out" names of persons, ships, and the like."

It goes without saying that prisoners were also shipped into Kolyma by the northern route--the run from Archangel east through the Arctic Ocean. This route was attempted because during the 1930's Soviet ships carrying slave laborers on the run from Vladivostok to Magadan passed through the Sea of Japan and the Tatar Strait, both of which were constantly filled with Japanese vessels; for obvious reasons, the Russians were not too eager to have the Fascist Japanese circles learn of this Soviet cargo. However, due to the extreme difficulties of navigation along the northern route, successes were few; instances of ships carrying laborers being caught in the ice with no survivors were not few. In summation, even if the northern route is discounted, the importation of 400,000 to 500,000 laborers annually is not impossible.

161 Recent estimates of the total population of the area have ranged between 300,000 and 1,000,000; however, inspite of the fantastic death rate among prisoners, millions have been imported as laborers, and there is reason to believe that there is approximately between one and one and a half million people in the area.

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655 5) Development of the Kolyma Area (1927-1931): Commercial gold mining really began in the Kolyma fields in 1927, and at first the entire production was in the hands of free agents who ventured into the area. "In 1929, according to official Soviet statements, gold was being panned in three fields,.... There were altogether 65 prospectors working in the three fields, and a total of 108 men living in the adjoining settlements."[2] According to Soviet law at that time, all gold was to be delivered to the government trust, Soyuz-Zoloto (Union Gold); however, no branch of this trust was closer to the Kolyma gold fields than that office in Okhotsk, which was still more than 1,000 miles from the fields. Furthermore, private gold buyers were willing to pay a higher price for gold than was the government which was attempting to keep gold prices on a level with the rising prices of commodities. This situation had the result that a large "black market" in gold arose, and much of the gold, according to Soviet officials, went into the hands of the Japanese, whose fishing boats were almost omnipresent in the Sea of Okhotsk. These fishing boats brought merchandise to sell in the gold fields, and this can be substantiated by the fact that much of the goods in the Magadan area at that time bore Japanese labels.

The Soviet Government found itself faced with two possible solutions to the problem: either it could permit free-lance gold prospecting as had been the case in California and Alaska, or it could invest a large amount of money into the area in an attempt to build up its own resources for extracting the gold. The first measure was hardly feasible, especially by a government whose basic principle was opposition to free enterprise, and the second possibility was practically impossible because the Soviet Union at that time had no money to invest. It was in this manner that the Soviet Government decided to invest its only and largest asset at that time—people. However, since few volunteers were

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2 Ibid., p. 113. 1 [the Kolyma region—Analyst]

willing to venture into such an inhospitable area, prisoner labor was considered to be the only solution whereby sufficient numbers of personnel would be available in Kolyma to exploit the gold resources there. It was at this time that the collectivization program was in progress in the Soviet Union, and labor was to be found in abundance in the form of those sturdy peasants, especially in the Ukraine and White Russia, who opposed the confiscation of their land into collectivized enterprises. Furthermore, previous attempts at the use of prisoner labor had been satisfactory in the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal. Consequently, it was decided to move large numbers of "socially hostile elements," as they were called, into the Magadan area to exploit the gold fields.

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6) Assumption of Control by Dalstroy (Far Eastern Construction Administration) - 1931-1932: In the winter of 1931-1932 a special administrative unit was established under the name of Dalstroy, and this organization was responsible for the development of the extreme northeastern part of Siberia—the primary task was the exploitation of the gold-rich Kolyma region. It should be noted that Dalstroy was under the direct control of the GPU (later reorganized into the NKVD and again into the MVD), which immediately undertook to supply the organization with huge numbers of laborers. It might be mentioned that Dalstroy had "first pick" of all the prisoners throughout the Soviet Union; simultaneously Dalstroy procured adequate numbers of free-labor specialists, namely, engineers of all types who were to organize the actual exploitation of gold.

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a. The Leadership of Berzin (1932-1937): Berzin was the head of Dalstroy during the years 1932-1937, and since he was the very first of the NKVD chiefs of the organization, his administration was filled with a terrible loss of life; this was not permitted to interfere with his mission, however.

After a preliminary examination of the situation, it was decided to establish a port on the Sea of Okhotsk and penetrate gradually inland rather than to use an overland route. The harbor of Nagayev, located close to the Ola River estuary, was selected as the primary base of operations; this harbor is at present the port which services the chief city of Magadan. (Note: This harbor is approximately 10 miles long and 3 miles wide.) In order to show the complete uninhabitability of the surrounding area near Nagayevo, the port area has been described as "surrounded by ridges of rock which overhang the water. The rocks, sometimes rising a thousand feet or more, protect the harbor, but on their open sides the winds blow unchecked. Down below where the steep cliffs meet the water, there is no land for human shelter. Above, one is blown off one's feet by the force of the wind that is cold, damp, penetrating, and unequalled in ferocity anywhere in the world."[3] Beyond the ridges surrounding the harbor there is a swamp of the type familiar to this region, under which perennial ice exists; beyond the swamps come the taiga.

In the summer of 1932 ships were dispatched from Vladivostok loaded with Dalstroy cargo, including machinery, equipment, foodstuffs, and manpower. The steamers were gifts to the NKVD by the Soviet Government, and each ship made from 12 to 15 voyages from Vladivostok that navigation season. These ships were specially constructed to hold large numbers of prisoners, and machine-guns covered every inch of the cells. No precautions were neglected to prevent the escape of prisoners in the areas where Japanese ships might rescue escapees and learn the nature of the Magadan enterprise.

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3 Ibid., p. 117.